

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02038 281701Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
CU-02 SSM-03 IO-13 MCT-01 /075 W
-----282041Z 010891 /44

R 281551Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2425
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2038

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN MEDIA ANNOUNCES ARREST OF "IRAQI-BACKED GANG"
RESPONSIBLE FOR MURDER DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY RECTOR
AND OTHER CRIMES

REF: A) DAMASCUS 2007; B) DAMASCUS 1338; C) DAMASCUS 1270
D) 76 DAMASCUS 7003

SUHMARY: SYRIAN MEDIA ANNOUNCED ARRESTS OF GANG ALLEGEDLY
SUPPORTED BY IRAQ AND RESPONSIBLE FOR MURDER DAMASCUS
UNIVERSITY RECTOR AND OTHER SUBVERSIVE ACTS. THIS PAT ACCOUNTING
FOR TO SERIES OF TERRORIST ACTS GOING BACK ALMOST A YEAR
NOT LIKELY TO BE WIDELY BELIEVED. REPORTS OF FURTHER
INCIDENTS SUGGEST THAT REGIME'S OPPONENTS STILL MAINTAIN
CAPABILITY OF PERPETRATING ACTS OF VIOLENCE IN SYRIA.END
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SUMMARY.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1.SYRIAN MEDIA MARCH 27-28 TRUMPETED ARREST OF NUMBER
OF INDIVIDUALS ALLEGED TO HAVE ASSASSINATED DAMASCUS
UNIVERSITY RECTOR MUHAMMAD AL-FADIL LAST MONTH. ADDITIONALLY,

GANG IS SAID TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEATHS OF THREE OTHER OFFICIALS IN HAMA PLUS NUMBER OF EXPLOSIONS GOING BACK ALMOST A YEAR. STORIES DID NOT GIVE EITHER NAMES OR NUMBERS THOSE ARRESTED BUT IDENTIFIED FOR FIRST TIME SOME OF THOSE KILLED IN ADDITION TO FADIL.

2. STORIES STRESSED THAT THOSE ARRESTED ACTED AT IRAQI INSTIGATION AND CLAIMED SECURITY FORCES SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE OF FULL COOPERATION FROM SYRIAN CITIZENRY IN PROVIDING INFORMATION. PRESS HEADLINED: "GANG OF ASSASSINS AND SABOTAGE IN HANDS OF JUSTICE. THE FASCIST IRAQI REGIME FINANCES THE GANG AND IS BEHIND ITS CRIMES." ARTICLES CHARGED THAT MANY OF THOSE ARRESTED HAD VISITED BAGHDAD AND RECEIVED ORDERS, FINANCING, PLANNING ASSISTANCE, AND OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT FROM GOI. THOSE ARRESTED ARE TO BE TRIED BEFORE THE SUPREME STATE SECURITY TRIBUNAL SOON AND PRESS PREDICTED THAT TRIALS WOULD REVEAL "STARTLING DETAILS ABOUT VILENESS OF THE TAKRITI PLANS AND SUPERVISES EXECUTION OF ACTS OF ASSASSINATION AND SUBVERSION."

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3. THIS FIRST TIME SYRIAN PRESS HAD ADMITTED KILLINGS OCCURRED IN HAMA. NAMES OF THOSE KILLED ARE GIVEN AS HASAN KHALIL, SADIF HAMWI, AND OFFICER ALI HAYDAR. KILLINGS SAID TO HAVE OCCURRED "SEVERAL MONTHS AGO." GANG ALSO SAID BE RESPONSIBLE FOR NUMBER OF EXPLOSIONS IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS IN SYRIA (SUCH EXPLOSIONS ARE USUALLY ONLY ADMITTED TO HAVE OCCURRED AFTER ARRESTS HAVE BEEN MADE.)
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ONLY SPECIFIC EXPLOSION, MENTIONED IN ARTICLE OCCURRED ON MALKI STREET, A BUSY DAMASCUS THOROUGHFARE, DURING LAST SUMMER'S DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL FAIR.

4. A NUMBER OF CONFIRMED AND RUMORED ASSASSINATIONS OF SARG AND BAATH PARTY OFFICIALS HAVE OCCURRED IN HAMA OR BEEN COMMITTED BY GROUPS ALLEGEDLY OPERATING OUT OF HAMA. IN OCTOBER, WE REPORTED (REF C) THREE MAJORS HAD BEEN KILLED IN HAMA AND IN FEBRUARY 1976 SECURITY CHIEF GHURRA AS ASSASSINATED. NAMES GIVEN DO NOT COINCIDE WITH DETAILS WE HAVE OF SUCH INCIDENTS, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE HEARD I TERMITTENT REPORTS ABOUT OTHER KILLINGS IN HAMA. FROM NEWS ACCOUNTS, IT WOULD SEEM HURDERS HAVE ONLY TAKEN PLACE RECENTLY. SOURCE FROM PROMINENT HAMA FAMILY TOLD US NAMES OF THOSE MURDERED APPEARED TO COME FROM OUTSIDE HAMA. OFFICER HAYDAR MAY WELL HAVE BEEN SECURITY CHIEF FOR HAMA DISTRICT WHO REPLACED GHURRA, SINCE THERE NUMBER OF REPORTS THAT HAMA SECURITY CHIEF MURDERED SIX MONTHS AGO ALONG WITH SEVERAL OTHER ALAWITE SECURITY OFFICIALS IN WELL LAID AMBUSH.

5.SINCE ARRESTS HAVE OCCURRED, WE HAVE RECEIVED
REPORTS OF FURTHER VIOLENCE DIRECTED AGAINST ASAD REGIME.
EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE FROM ALEPPO, WHO VISITED CITY
MARCH 25-27, REPORTS THAT MANY DIFFERENT PEOPLE TOLD HIM
CAPTAIN IN SECURITY FORCES HAD BEEN KILLED DURING PERIOD
HE WAS IN ALEPPO BY SINGLE MAN ON MOTORCYCLE.DURING
HIS RETURN TO DAMASCUS EVENING MARCH 27, HE WAS STOPPED
AT ROADBLOCKS THREE TIMES FOR IDENTITY CHECKS; ONCE ON
OUTSKIRTS OF ALEPPO AND TWICE MORE BEFORE ENTERING CITIES
OF HAMA AND HOMS. NUMBER OF ROAD BLOCKS HEAVIER THAN USUAL
AND SUGGESTS THAT THERE BASIS FOR THE STORY. ACCORDING TO
ANOTHER RUMOR AS YET UNCONFIRMED FOUR MEMBERS OF SECURITY
FORCES WERE AMBUSHED IN THEIR VEHICLE IN DAMASCUS LAST WEEK
AND ALL TAKEN WOUNDED TO HOSPITAL AFTER EXCHANGING FIRE WITH
THEIR ASSAILANTS. ALSO BY NEW REGULATION ALL
MOTORCYCLES NOW BANNED FROM CERTAIN PARTS OF CENTRAL DAMASCUS
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AND ARE NOT PERMITTED TO BE OPERATED ANYWHERE IN CITY AFTER
8:00 P.M.

6. COMMENT: REF A EXPRESSED REASONS FOR SKEPTICISM THAT
THOSE CHARGED ARE IN FACT RESPONSIBLE FOR KILLINGS OF RECTOR
AL-FADIL ALTHOUGH THEY MAY WELL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST, IF
NOT ALL, OTHER ACTS DILINEATED IN ARTICLES. SARG ACCOUNT
NEATLY TIES UP WIDE VARIETY OF HERETOFORE UNSOLVED
ACTS OF TERRORISM GOING BACK ALMOST A YEAR AND CONVENIENTLY
LAYS THEM ALL AT IRAQ'S DOOR. EVEN WITHOUT THE LATEST
ALEPPO INCIDENT, THIS CONCLUSITN IS JUST TOO PAT AND IS
ALREADY BEING DISMISSED AS CLUMSY GOVERNMENT
ATTEMPT TO DEMONSTRATE FULL CONTROL. WHAT MUST BE
DISTRUBING TO ASAD, HOWEVER, IS ABILITY OF REGIME'S
OPPONENTS TO CARRY ON EVEN AFTER SIZEABLE ARRESTS.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MURDER, ARRESTS, TERRORISTS
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DAMASC02038
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770106-0471
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770317/aaaaaoba.tel
Line Count: 155
Litigation Code IDs:
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Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 DAMASCUS 2007, 77 DAMASCUS 1338, 77 DAMASCUS 1270
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2980311
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN MEDIA ANNOUNCES ARREST OF \"IRAQI-BACKED GANG\" RESPONSIBLE FOR MURDER DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY RECTOR AND OTHER CRIMES
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SY
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d9e839b1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009